

REASON FOUR

By Kristy Griggs

A Great Place to Move Your Business and Life

Five Transplanted Utah Business Leaders Describe Their Experience



WHETHER MOVING FROM ANOTHER COUNTRY, across the nation or to a neighboring state, being a transplant isn't always easy. Adjusting to a new culture, relocating a family, establishing a new social circle and making a successful business move is a major life endeavor. Many have made the journey to Utah, a state that claims many highly successful and happy transplants. Kevin Cushing, Ragula Bhaskar, Kimberly Jones, Patrick Byrne, Mark Sunday and Martin Frey aren't originally from the Beehive State, but each is having a tremendous impact in their adopted home state.

Kevin Cushing—The restaurateur turned printing mogul moved to Utah to head up Alphagraphics, one of the largest printing companies in the world. Alphagraphics boasts more than 280 locations in 11 countries, and as CEO, Cushing hopes to double that number within five years.

Kimberly Jones—At the helm of Vérité Multimedia, Jones is leading the digital communications agency to a host of prestigious awards and an impressive list of clients. Founded in 1993, Vérité's clients include some of the world's leading technology companies, such as IBM, Hewlett-Packard, Novell and Symantec, as well as leading Utah companies Altiris and Helius.

Ragula Bhaskar—President and CEO of FatPipe, Bhaskar is originally from India and graduated from Penn State before moving to Utah for a teaching job at the University of Utah. His successful launch of a private business in 1989 led to the invention of a routing cluster, a data transfer option providing companies with more server security and a huge increase in total bandwidth. Bhaskar, his wife Sanch and FatPipe maintain a large presence in Utah's high-tech community.

Patrick Byrne—Byrne is the CEO of Overstock.com, an online retail outlet with a fresh approach of selling items at already discounted prices. In 1994,

Overstock.com generated nearly \$500 million in revenue and Byrne is looking to expand the company's online auction presence.

Martin Frey—Frey relocated to Utah in January 2005 to serve as managing director for economic development in the Governor's Office of Economic Development. Since then, Frey has been an integral part of a "pro-business" administration aggressively implementing initiatives to help grow Utah's businesses and economy.

Mark Sunday—As senior vice president of information technology and CIO of Siebel Systems, Sunday is enthusiastic about the company's move to Utah. Siebel Systems is a leading provider of business applications software that enables companies to sell to customers across multiple channels and lines of business.

Recently, *Business Utah* had the chance to catch up with these dynamic Utah business leaders:

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF UTAH'S BUSINESS COMMUNITY?

Cushing: Utah's business community is highly regarded. Our headquarters were relocated to Utah five years ago and since then we've grown substantially. Part of it has to do with more workforce choices in Utah. There is more population movement (in comparison with other states) and the business community is growing and strengthening. More businesses are turning to Alphagraphics for their business needs—we have centers from St. George to Ogden and we're hoping to raise our center numbers from 272 to 500, and to introduce a new model within five years.

Jones: Utah has a vibrant, active business community with growing diversity that provides opportunities for local businesses to serve Utah's business community. More business is coming to Utah and I'm excited about that growth. It is much needed and likely due to entrepreneurial growth



RAGULA BHASKAR



PATRICK BYRNE

in Utah. The state is taking startups to a new level. More new companies are becoming vital businesses.

Sunday: I'm impressed with how tight the community is. When I worked in the Bay Area, I had a different impression of Utah's business community. Moving here seemed to me like leaving a hotbed of technology to go live in the Outback. I knew Utah was a wonderful place to live, but not overflowing with business connections. I have found the reality to be quite the opposite. The business community is small in terms of geography and size, but it has established itself—including the IT community—with the help of Rich Nelson and UITA (Utah Information Technology Association). I haven't seen anything like it before.

Bhaskar: Utah is a good place to get started. I'm very happy with the progress of my business. The initial investments in FatPipe from people in the state helped tremendously, and I have found that there is a good investment

culture in Utah. Businesses try to help each other by inviting you to make presentations and UITA is a strong force in the community. Also, because Utah is an at-will state there is a high level of flexibility to hire and change staff according to business needs; it's easier to change with the times.

Frey: Utah has an extremely well educated workforce. People are able to solve problems, rather than deflect responsibility by saying 'that's not my job.' They often go the extra mile. A company recently decided to relocate to Utah, bringing 1,000 jobs with it. While the company had offers in other states, it wanted to come here because of the people. There is a perception that Utah doesn't get it, in terms of business—that it isn't a business friendly state. But it is. There is a very good understanding of business in Utah. On top of that, there is a great quality of life, which has an effect on the business community.

Byrne: This is the best place in the country to do business. The legal en-

vironment here is unlike other states that are somewhat anti-law, in the sense that businesses know what the law is regarding contracts and hiring. Here it is clear and uniformly applied.

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT DOING BUSINESS IN UTAH?

Cushing: Utah has one of the best four-season climates and that makes for a great lifestyle. Utah also has a highly educated work force with a great work ethic. Our workforce also has a high degree of worldliness—many of them have been exposed to different cultures. I think our workforce attracts small businesses to the state. From a tax standpoint, it's a fair place.

Jones: The ability to network in Utah because of its size. It's much easier and better due to the smaller business community here. I feel like I know most people in my sector, which is pretty unusual. Communication is often purposeful and companies seem to be looking for synergy; there

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Patrick Byrne

is definitely an open environment for an exchange of ideas.

Bhaskar: In terms of capital, there is a lot of seed money in Utah and a lot of home grown talent, which is a great combination. Although investing tends not to be high-risk, overall it does work out. And because the process of starting a business in Utah is fairly simple, one can build companies here. Unlike Silicon Valley, where they're flipping fast, Utah investors are willing to wait. Another unique aspect to the business community in Utah is how idea-oriented companies are.

Frey: There are two key things. First, Utah has a phenomenal entrepreneurial spirit. Utah is consistently rated at or near the top for startups per capita; Utahns are taking risks and starting up businesses. Second, we have a phenomenal work ethic. The United States Post Office recently consolidated some regional offices in Utah. A large part of the reason for the move was the productivity of Utah's postal workers. In addition to the work ethic, support for non-unions makes Utah attractive.

Also, there is a great spirit of collaboration here. Community leaders at the universities, in the legislature and in business are all pulling on the same oars heading in the same direction. I haven't experienced anything in other states where collaboration is this strong.

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Sunday: Again, size and geography. The vast majority of Utah's population is located in a relatively small space combined with a business climate of people working together. In the Bay Area and New York, you don't find the same communication that spans related industries. Utah's business community is one with a number of vehicles of communication that come together.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE UTAH LIFESTYLE?

Cushing: We have found living here terrific. My family has gotten involved in the many activities available in the state year round. Also, there are a great number of charities rooted in the community to get involved in.

Bhaskar: This is a good state to live in. You find the same sort of facilities here that you do in a big city without the headaches of traffic and crime. My office is nine miles away from my home and it takes me nine minutes to get there every day (laughs). The advantage of being in Utah is I have a whole group of people who have been with me since the beginning. They are loyal associates. Plus my traveling options are wonderful. The Salt Lake City airport is one of the major hubs for many airlines so I can get to any part of the world, often on a direct flight. And the cost of living is reasonable.

Jones: Skiing in the morning and golfing in the afternoon. Seriously—I love this state. There were challenges for me when I first moved to Utah: I was a newbie in every sense of the word. Before we moved here I told my husband “three years.” It's been 14. I love the beauty of the mountains and the cost of living is still palatable—especially if you're coming from California.

Byrne: The outdoors and just the sheer quality of life make this is a great, great place to live.

Sunday: My wife and I never want to leave. It is a great place to raise our two sons. The boys are learning about the outdoors, nature and animal life. There is a sense of community here that I've experienced more of in a few months than I did in more than three years while I was in the Bay Area. We've been able to build a network of unique individuals who enjoy the quality of the social infrastructure here—such as the schools, libraries, the ice arena now being built in Park City, the extraordinary Utah hiking trail system, the field house, free music in the summer and

festivals. My family and I feel very connected here.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF GOVERNOR HUNTSMAN'S BUSINESS INITIATIVES?

Frey: He is already making an impact on the business community with his support of entrepreneurs, small companies and business resources, revamping the tax structure and simplifying regulation issues.

Byrne: While I like and support Governor Huntsman, I am still looking for more educational choice initiatives. In fact, I'm counting on it.

Jones: I think the good intentions are there, but I'm looking to see how the ideas are being communicated and how they address long-term growth.

Bhaskar: We have one of the most aggressive pro-business governors I've ever seen in Jon Huntsman, Jr. Businesses in Utah have a strong voice and an economic development department that is looking out for them. There is a proactive approach by the current government. As a result, more businesses are either moving to Utah or more local investment is taking place from existing companies. In three to five years I think we'll see the results from the governor's pro-business policies.

Cushing: Governor Huntsman has good initiatives for business and making this state a great place to live.

Sunday: Before Huntsman was elected, I was extremely impressed when my phone rang one day and it was Jon Huntsman calling to see if I could visit with him to discuss some things. He was truly interested in why we relocated to Utah and wanted to know what the state could do to make relocating businesses to Utah easier. He told me, and this was before he was elected, that he believes the number one job of government is economic development. And I agree, because it drives everything. I'm a big fan of the governor and his plan.



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